Fourth World Water Forum -- Session Report

Session: FT 2.31
Date & Time: Saturday March 18th, 2006. 2:30-4:30 PM
Place: Room Montejo 1, Banamex Center
Session Title: "Management Link for Freshwaters and Coasts, Progress in Local Actions"

Sessions Conveners:

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - Global Programme of Action (GPA)
- U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – National Ocean Service (NOS) – International Program Office (IPO)
- Mexico's Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), DGPAIRS
- Global Forum on Ocean, Coasts, and Islands (GFOCI)

Moderator and Speakers:

Keynotes Speakers

- Dr. Biliana Cicin-Sain, GFOCI
- Dr. Clement Lewsey, NOAA/NOS-IPO
- Mr. Takehiro Nakamura, IW-GEF UNEP
- Mr. Cees van de Guchte, UNEP-GPA
- Dr. Patricia Muñoz, Mexico's National Polytechnic Institute
- Dr. Neils Ipsen, UNEP Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment

Case Study Speakers

- Dr. Jorge Euan, CINVESTAV (Merida), Mexico
- Dr. Ajit Pattnaik, Chilika Development Authority, India
- Ms. Donna Spencer, Institute of Marine Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago
- Mr. Emil Cherrington, CATHALAC, Panama

Moderator

- Dr. Gonzalo Cid, NOAA/NOS-IPO

Scope of the Session

The session aimed to highlight the need for integrating watershed and coastal management and present key questions to move ahead on this issue among countries, institutions, and natural resource users. The goal was to present different perspectives from current international program and institutional efforts, and some lessons learned from country case studies at different stages of designing and implementing a national or local integrated freshwater and coast management program under the UNEP Global Programme of Action framework. The specific objectives of the session were:

1. Present the concept of freshwater-to-oceans linkages;
2. Describe various approaches to promote the concept;
3. Report on the previous dialogue on freshwater-to-oceans interlinkages and preparations for the Second GPA Intergovernmental Review;
4. Present the approach of the NOAA/GPA agreement to develop GPA-National Programmes of Action in the Wider Caribbean; and
5. Share case study experiences, best management practices, and lessons learned in the implementation of the GPA and in the partnership on linking Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management (ICM).

The conclusions of this panel will feed into the Intergovernmental Review of the UNEP-GPA (IGR-2) to be held in Beijing on October 16-20, and the Global Water Partnership summit to be held in Stockholm, August 2006.

Session Remark Summary

The keynote speakers highlighted the interconnection among freshwater, coasts, and oceans systems and the need for an integrated management approach to water-related issues. The UNEP-GPA establishes a framework and gives guidelines to nations to develop National Programs of Action (NPAs) that can assist countries in implementing integrated watershed and coastal management legal and institutional framework by using primarily existing capacities and, if necessary, developing new ones. Some considerations from key speakers include:

- GFOCI facilitates the discussion of the global oceans agenda and promotes implementation of the international commitments related to oceans, coasts, and islands. Dr. Cicin–Sain presented questions to explore general considerations and obstacles to freshwater and ocean management integration, and questions on governance structures to achieve this integration to be explored among the case studies presented at the session.

- GPA and NOAA have a collaborative agreement to help nations in the Wider Caribbean Region to assess their freshwater and ocean management integration capacities and develop NPAs under the GPA framework and the countries' specific needs. Dr. Lewsey defined the GPA framework and cycle, the problems of IWRM and ICM integration in Caribbean countries, and steps on NPA development from NOAA/GPA case studies.

- The goal of GEF-IW is to assist countries in using the full range of technical, economic, financial, regulatory, and institutional measures needed to operationalize sustainable development strategies for international waters. Mr. Nakamura highlighted the IW cases projects in

Sao Francisco river basin in Brazil, and in the Wider Caribbean Region. GEF challenges include promoting public participation and project information dissemination.

- GPA seeks commitments on the highest political level through the National Programs of Action. Mr. van de Guchte agreed with the audience that freshwaters to coasts should be linked and their management should be inclusive and integrated. Linking freshwater and oceans includes connections to poverty alleviation, overarching national planning, and integrated coastal zone management plans, but the question remains how to develop the link.

- Dr. Muñoz presented the objectives and scope of the Workshop on Freshwater and Coastal Management Interlinkages held in Mexico City in January 2006. She highlighted that the goal of the workshop was to help to set up a framework to speak the same language, not only in the academic world, but among all major stakeholders involved in freshwater and ocean activities, including entrepreneurs and NGOs.

After the keynote speakers, four case studies from Mexico, India, Trinidad and Tobago, and Panama were presented focusing on the experiences of developing national and/or regional freshwater and coastal integrated programs by using the UNEP-GPA framework as a major tool to guide the integration process among national institutions and major stakeholders.

Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico

SEMARNAT, with the support of the NOAA/GPA agreement and the technical support of CINVESTAV-Merida, is currently developing a Regional Program of Action (RPA-Yucatan), considering the region's unique hydrologic characteristics and rapid population growth (and associated services) as a result of large tourism flows. An initial three-day consultation meeting brought together more than 70 representatives from the federal and three state governments, NGOs, and other institutions to discuss the issues, objectives, and actions to be implemented in the regional program and endorse the plan. The plan of action is currently under review and consists of the following seven areas of development: Geo-hydrology and characteristics of the Yucatan karst; coastal ecosystems, resources, and biodiversity in risk; current state and trends of the environmental quality of coastal ecosystems; point and non-point sources of marine pollution; Information networks on land-based sources of marine pollution; social participation, behavior, and education; legislation, regulations, and institutional arrangements.

Both the workshop and the results of the process for developing the RPA-Yucatan were sponsored by the federal government and supported by the State environmental agencies.

Chilika Lagoon, India

Chilika, the largest lagoon along the east coast of India, is a unique assemblage of marine, brackish, and freshwater ecosystems with estuarine characters. It is one of the hotspots of biodiversity and shelters a number of endangered species listed in the IUCN red list of threatened species, and also is a designated Ramsar site. From 1992 onward the Chilika Development Authority (CDA), in cooperation with several other institutions and the local communities, implemented an assortment of interventions combining technology and institutions that demonstrated beneficial changes in a short period of time. The hydrological interventions undertaken to restore the lagoon have resulted in considerable improvement of its fishery resources and water quality and have had a positive impact on the biodiversity of the lagoon and the adjoining coastal ecosystem. The CDA adopted a strategy to facilitate the restoration process by, among other action, adopting an ecosystem approach, targeting key studies, and generating public awareness of the system. The rehabilitation of Chilika Lagoon demonstrates that the interlinked freshwater-marine problems could be solved by an integrated management approach for lagoon and watershed.

Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)

With the support of UNEP-GPA and NOAA, T&T is engaged in designing and implementing an NPA. The T&T approach is unique because it was endorsed at 2004 at the national level. The government legitimized this process early and appointed a ministerial committee to conduct the NPA. The Institute of Marine Affairs leads the process, and at least 10 government agencies and ministries participate on the coordinating committee. The national NPA process has the objective of developing feasible responses to human impacts on the marine environment, and supporting existing efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive coastal zone policy. T&T is following a two-phase approach: the first one in process is the assessment of the legal and institutional framework and national consultations to define the structure of the NPA. The secorn phase will involve the implementation of the NPA and development of a national pilot project. According to the T&T experience, public education and institutional sensitization of decision makers are key to successful development and implementation of an NPA. It is also important that the NPA be developed with reference to other national plans being developed, e.g., National Integrated Waste Management Plan; National Plan of Action to Address Land Degradation; National Wetland Policy.

Panama

CATHALAC is the regional center of excellence dedicated to the promotion of sustainable human development through integrated management of water and environmental resources. CATHALAC is developing an agreement with NOAA to support its GPA-related efforts in the region and also to support the development of an NPA in Panama. The implementation of the GPA initiative is an initiative of the Panama National Committee for the International Hydrologic Programme (CONAPHI) of UNESCO and is advised by CATHALAC. The group

implementing the GPA is composed of the National Environmental Authority Panama Maritime Authority, the University of Panama, The University of Technology of Panama, and the Ministry of Agricultural Development. Panama will also implement a two-phased approach and, in the first one, the consultation meeting will be carried out by the first half of 2006.

Lessons Learned from the Case Studies

The following lessons can be summarized from the four case studies. The speakers consider that during the initial steps or during the implementation of a National Program of Action under the GPA framework, is important to:

- Have institutional and individual leadership to start and carry on process
- Develop and promote key partnerships (including international cooperation) to start the process of institutional integration for watershed and coastal management
- Develop the financial mechanisms to implement the national and/or regional plans of actions
- Obtain an early endorsement of the process by national-level institutions
- Enhance inter-institutional coordination and communication
- Build upon the existing legal and institutional framework
- Validate the process through national and/or local consultation
- Consider an integrated ecosystem approach
- Solicit public and/or local communities participation, which is essential to the success of the process
- Some objectives of the program of action should target the local community needs and desires.

Key Messages

- Integrating freshwater and ocean management is a need for the nations and it requires the support of national/local authorities and participation of multiple institutions and stakeholders with interest in the water resources
- Implementation of the GPA requires government (national or local) endorsement and development of key partnerships
- Get people (communities or stakeholders) engaged in all steps of the design and implementation process
- Define clear and measurable goals and objectives on what the NPA is for and what will be its benefits

Report by
Gonzalo Cid, NOAA/NOS
Heather Allen, NOAA/OIA

Case study presentations and an at-large report can be downloaded from:
http://international.nos.noaa.gov/gpa/news/news.html